

This Is the Song They Sang

TRAMP! TRAMP! TRAMP!

Words and music by Geo. F. Root.



"Tramp, Tramp, Tramp," by George F. Root, is almost unknown to the younger generations, but to those who lived during the civil war it brings recollections of other martial airs of those days. Two famous war songs were written by Mr. Root, "The Battle Cry of Freedom" (1861), and "Tramp, Tramp, Tramp," (1864).

U. S. TROOPS IN
TRENCHES HURL
SHELLS AT FOES

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though the force of its current may not be felt by the enemy until later. Concerning the movement of troops and supplies, the vast scheme of preparation constantly going forward, nothing may be said, so that no confusion can be drawn regarding the time when the infantry will go "over the top."

It was on a certain misty, gray morning. Precisely at 6 o'clock, as the men stood tense and alert, their gun ranged far away across the sky, the American captain gave the short command to fire. The gunner jerked the lanyard. A sharp roar—and the first American shell sped screamingly toward a German battery, and America had literally and formally entered the war.

Eager hands clasped the brass shell case as it came hot from the breach and zealously guarded it. Some time soon it will reach President Wilson, the gift of Major General Sibert.

Throughout the day, with veteran French gunners beside them, likewise serving weapons the American battery sent its shells hurtling across searching out the Germans.

Heard Song of Shell.
Back to the rear American infantry in their billets heard the song of the shell, knew their brothers of the field piece were "in action," and waited impatiently for the night to come, when they, too, should take their place in line.

When night had covered the roads with its darkness the American infantrymen swung out on the roads. It was raining. In pitch darkness they trudged along with the elastic step that is the marvel of both their British and French brothers in arms. I saw them as they trudged through the smudgy darkness, rain pelting down on their closely buttoned overcoats, dripping from their trench helmets of dun-colored steel over rifles slung across their shoulders and packs that loomed dim in the night. Their serviceable shoes clomped over the "pave" of the street of a certain little town and echoed softly in the sodden rain-soaked air. There was a faint hum in the ranks. Then came voices lifted up in the hallowed civil war refrain—"Tramp, Tramp, Tramp, the Boys Are Marching."

Hum Is Silenced.
It was softly sung, but it carried clear on the still night air. A dozen voices, raucous, rough, objected.

"Cut it out! Shut up! The Boches'll hear you!"

The song and the indefinable hum was silenced. On the ranks passed, trench shoes scuffing, pounding in another softer chorus of sound—the actuality of the "tramp, tramp, tramp, the boys are marching."

Their shadowy forms merged into the darkness ahead—there where even darker spots proclaimed sheltered roads against the German shell that might possibly leap suddenly out of the sky. Then came the crunching metallic roll of wheels that supported fantastic lumbering caissons—the "rolling kitchen" to deal out hot stomachic comfort for the fighting men. Boxes of food on other wheels rumbled by. The shapes ceased. The troops had really and truly reached "over there."

Ahead in the trenches they took their places. French veterans in their faded uniforms hailing them as real

brothers—but always with due regard to inquisitive ears of those across No Man's Land who might be attuned to stray sounds.

Every khaki-garbed soldier who heard the glorious news today carried his shoulders just a bit higher and buckled down just a little harder to his training task fervently wishing for the moment when he too could slip over darkened roads to the earthly gash that marks where training play at war ends and stern reality begins.

Tried to Keep Secret.
American headquarters tried its best to keep the movement of certain Sammies to the trenches a secret except from the commanders directly concerned and from a few French authorities, until the troops are actually moving.

Fears of the battalion commander that the Boches might hear his men taking over their positions proved unfounded. The swishing of trees, the gurgling of rain-swollen gutters and the occasional rattling of French army wagons were the only sounds. The "relief" had been effected quietly. It was purposely done quietly, because the Boche guns had been preserving stillness for some time. As the American correspondents, six of them, the only civilians who saw the historic sight, stood at the crossroads some one flashed an electric torch on the guidepost. It had survived the weather and war alike and pointed ahead—"so-and-so (naming a village), so many kilometers away."

Within German Lines.
"Why can't we accompany the Sammies that far?" asked one. "Because that particular village is within the German lines," was an officer's smiling reply. Americans at home may be assured that their representatives on the firing line of democracy are occupying deep trenches and the most modern type of dugouts. They may not be seen by the enemy during the whole time they are there. But, on the other hand, they may experience any sort of an action. The German trenches are a considerable distance away. Although the sector is quiet now, it was once the scene of bitter fighting. This is attested by the graves by the roadside in the immediate rear of the American positions.

Few in this region have yet heard of the Americans having entered the trenches, but civilians along the line of their march to the front-line defense were elated.

Wanted to Shake Hands.
Five polius in rest billets behind the lines rushed up and insisted on shaking hands over and over with a trio of Americans.

General Sibert, after visiting the troops in their trench positions, reported their morale splendid. All attached to the expedition are enthusiastic over the Americans' debut in trench warfare.

It is probable that a movement will soon be launched to give members of this first force a medal or some other memento to signify that they were first in the trenches.

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